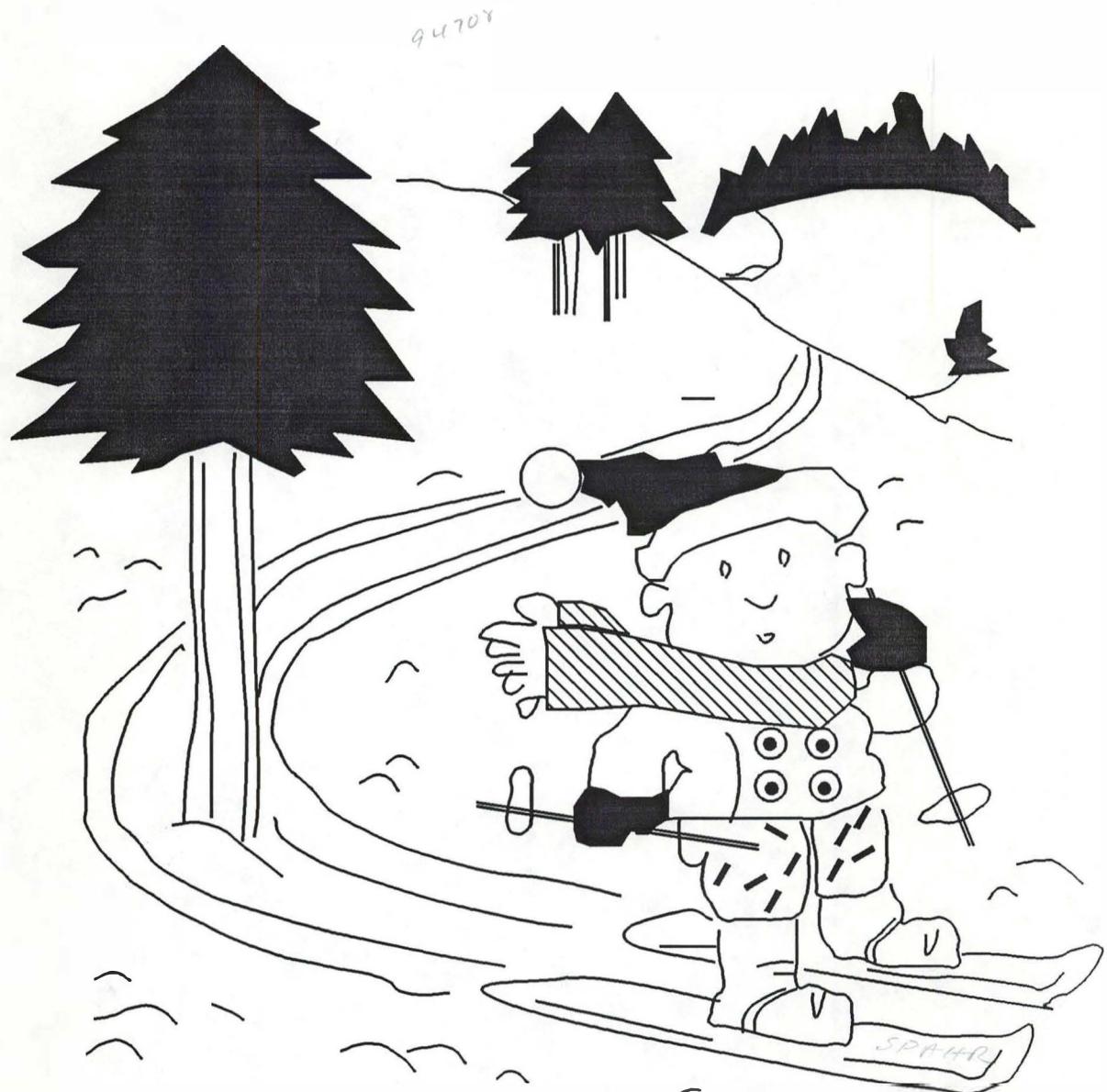


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WINTER RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES ON THE MOAB RANGER DISTRICT Manti-La Sal National Forest

A MARKETING PLAN



WINTER RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES ON THE MOAB RANGER DISTRICT

MANTI-LA SAL NATIONAL FOREST

A MARKETING PLAN

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ABSTRACT

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TITLE: **Marketing Winter Recreation on the Moab Ranger District**

ABSTRACT: The Moab Ranger District is located in southeastern Utah near the community of Moab. Since the 1940's, the area's economy was based mainly on the uranium industry. During the 1970's, the uranium industry began to fail and local government and business leaders began looking to recreation and tourism to support the community. Recreation and tourism have since become the mainstay of the local economy. It is, however, a spring, summer, and fall seasonal economy.

The Moab Ranger District and the La Sal Mountains offer outstanding opportunities for backcountry skiing and other winter recreation activities. The purpose of this marketing plan is to outline an approach to market and develop the winter recreation potential of the La Sal Mountains. This plan is written in support of the Forest Service's National Recreation Strategy and will, in turn, contribute to the economy of Moab and the surrounding area.

Keywords: Marketing, Partnerships, Winter Recreation, Backcountry Skiing, Cross-Country Skiing, Avalanche Forecast Center

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TITLE: Marketing Winter Recreation on the Moab Ranger District

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SUMMARY: The Forest Service has employed the concept of marketing in order to better serve the public by providing them with the programs they desire. This marketing plan has been developed to determine what winter programs should be developed on the Moab Ranger District based on user surveys and public involvement.

Data for the plan was gathered in three steps: a literature search, a trailhead register, and a public meeting. The literature search was conducted to determine what research and marketing information was available on the subject. Specific user data was collected at a winter trailhead during the winter of 1988-89. The register provided information on where recreationists were coming from, their length of stay, and the activities in which they were participating. The final step in data collection was a public meeting held in the fall of 1989. The meeting was attended by officials from the Moab Chamber of Commerce, Grand County Commission, Grand County Travel Council, Moab businesses, Telluride Helitrax, and private individuals. A great deal of information was gathered at this meeting concerning user preferences. Coincidentally, the meeting provided a forum for people to express their views on winter recreation management.

Research results show the greatest use by activity is backcountry skiing. The second highest use is by sightseers and families engaged in snowplay activities such as tubing. There is a very small amount of snowmobiling, mostly by Moab residents. Commercial use includes helicopter skiing, avalanche awareness classes, and environmental education courses. Most skiers are from the Moab area, followed by the Wasatch Front, western Colorado, and the Denver/Boulder area.

Discussion at the public meeting centered on cooperation between skiers and snowmobilers and between private and commercial uses. Cooperation was preferred as opposed to zoning areas for exclusive ski or snowmobile use. All those at the meeting felt that the current snow plowing provided by Grand County was key to the development of winter recreation and that this program should be continued. Support was expressed for the Moab District's La Sal Avalanche Forecast Center. Support of the center is also evident by its steadily increasing use. It was felt that a winter search and rescue unit should be formed and trained in avalanche rescue

and winter survival. There was a great deal of interest expressed in a hut-to-hut system.

The following recommendations are a result of this research and planning:

- Continue the operation of the La Sal Avalanche Forecast Center.
- Direct marketing efforts at the promotion of the La Sals as a backcountry ski range while allowing for secondary uses such as snowmobiling.
- Continue the cooperative agreement with Grand County for snow removal to provide winter access to the range.
- Work with local businesses and guide services to provide a hut-to-hut system.
- Assist the Grand County Sheriff's Department with the training of winter rescue personnel and the development of an emergency communications system.
- Work with outfitters and educational organizations to provide avalanche awareness and winter survival training.
- Ensure that commercial activities such as helicopter skiing and snow cat skiing are compatible with private uses prior to issuing permits.
- Do not pursue the development of downhill ski facilities.
- Develop partnerships with businesses to provide groomed ski trails and cross-country ski tours.
- Develop snow play areas for family use.
- Publish the La Sal Mountain Winter Recreation Trail Guide through the Canyonlands Natural History Association.
- Develop cooperative funding opportunities with private businesses to assist in funding the avalanche forecast center and snow removal.
- Develop rest room facilities at the Geyser Pass trailhead.
- Use zoning of ski and snowmobile areas only as a last resort.

ECONOMIC HISTORY AND CURRENT PROGRAMS

Since the 1940's, Moab and Grand County's economy was based predominantly on the uranium mining industry. Ranching and river running made up a significant part of the economy. However, the boom and bust economy of the mining industry was the dominant influence. During the 1970's, cheaper and higher grade uranium became available from Canada nearly putting an end to the industry in Grand County.

Since the late 70's, Moab's economy has been in transition from mining to recreation and tourism. The transition has not been easy, however there are indications are that the recreation based economy is succeeding. River running and jeeping have traditionally been the largest recreation contributors to the economy. More recently, an 18-hole professional golf course and the introduction of mountain bikes have made a significant contribution. Moab is recognized as one of the finest mountain biking areas in the United States.

Still, with the discovery of Moab as a recreation destination, the economy is largely based on a three season recreation year. Winter in Moab has yet to be discovered. The Chamber of Commerce, Travel Council, city and county political leaders and private businesses are very interested in promoting the area's potential for winter recreation. They look to the Moab Ranger District and the La Sal Mountains to help round out the recreation opportunities.

Purpose of This Plan

The purpose of this plan is to develop and market the winter recreation potential of the La Sal Mountains. Development and marketing will be based on user preferences and the mountains remote location in southeastern Utah.

This plan will accomplish the following items:

- Determine user preferences
- Determine current use patterns by activity and origin of users
- Develop specific objectives to be accomplished as a result of the plan
- Develop strategy to accomplish the specific objectives
- Develop action programs to implement the objectives
- Develop a procedure to evaluate the plans effectiveness

Current Winter Recreation Efforts

In 1988, a group of local skiers organized and petitioned the Forest Service and Grand County to improve the winter recreation opportunities in the La Sal Mountains. Their efforts centered on snow removal to provide access to ski terrain and the formation of an avalanche forecasting service. On one occasion, Grand County plowed snow for access in connection with a winter carnival sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. It wasn't until the 1988-1989 winter season that the county began plowing the road on a regular basis. It was also the 88-89 season that the La Sal

Mountain Avalanche Forecast Center was formed. As a result of a partnership between the Forest Service, Grand County, and the Grand County Travel Council people were finally able to drive a plowed road to a plowed parking area in snow country. They could also call the Forest Service office and listen to a pre-recorded message giving information on avalanche hazard as well as snow and road conditions before going on the mountain.

The Partnership

A memorandum of understanding was entered into by the Forest Service, Grand County, and the Grand County Travel Council to provide activities that will promote winter recreation in the La Sal Mountains. The agreement states that the county will plow snow to provide access to a parking area designated by the Forest Service. The Travel Council will provide advertising material, news releases and winter recreation posters. Lastly, the Forest Service agreed to design and operate an avalanche forecast center providing a pre-recorded call-in phone message for recreationists to call and obtain avalanche hazard, weather, snow, and road information before going on the mountain.

A copy of the Memorandum of Understanding between the county and the Forest Service is contained in Appendix A.

The Forecast Center

The La Sal Mountain Avalanche Forecast Center was formed through the use of a personal services contract. With the help of the Utah Avalanche Forecast Center and the National Weather Service the contractor designed and began operating the center in November of 1987. Before issuing the contract, the contractor's qualifications were reviewed by District personnel and the Director of the Utah Avalanche Forecast Center to ensure that a qualified individual was selected to issue forecasts. Equipment was purchased by the Forest Service to be used by the contractor. A surplus electronic weather station was obtained in order to gather detailed weather information.

Beside providing snow and weather information, public notification of the centers activities has proven to be an effective advertising campaign. News of the centers activities and phone number were outlined in the *Utah Sports Guide* published in Salt Lake City and the *Rocky Mountain Sports and Fitness Magazine* published in Denver. These publications informed people throughout Utah and Colorado of the winter opportunities available in the La Sal Mountains. The center was also reviewed in *The Avalanche Review* published by the American Association of Avalanche Professionals.

A review of the center's operation was conducted during the first winter of operation by the Utah Avalanche Forecast Center. The Utah center has been in operation for 12 years and issues forecasts for the Wasatch range outside of Salt Lake City. The review was conducted to ensure that the forecasts being issued by the La Sal center were accurate and based on scientific analysis and adequate field studies. The reviewers found the center to be professionally managed and the forecasts accurate. A copy of their review is contained in Appendix B.

A summary of the center's 1988-89 activities is contained in Appendix C.

WHAT IS MARKETING?

A simple definition of marketing is finding out what your customers want and to then provide the goods or services to meet their desires. This simple definition of marketing provides great opportunity for the Forest Service to meet the needs of their publics. As our name implies, we are a service organization. As a public service organization, we have a responsibility to the public to make an effort to determine what types of programs and services the public expects and then provide them within the constraints of law and regulation.

The purpose of this plan is to outline an approach to marketing winter recreation on the Moab Ranger District. The idea for the plan came from various meetings with the Moab Chamber of Commerce, Grand County Travel Council, private businesses, and winter recreation users of the La Sal Mountains.

The plan is arranged in eight sections:

Economic History and Current Programs: Outlines a basic economic history of Moab and our current winter program on the Moab Ranger District (previous section).

Analysis of the External Environment: Defines the Moab Ranger District's place in the winter market and some external influences on the District's program.

Needs Assessment: Determines which services we will offer based on user preferences and priorities.

Mission: States the mission of Utah National Forests and how our program will contribute to the accomplishment of this mission. The mission establishes some broad parameters in which to work.

Objectives: Specifies what the program is to accomplish. The objectives transform the mission statement into concrete operational terms.

Strategy: General guidelines for various program parts. The strategies provide a link between the objectives and the action programs.

Action Programs: Specific actions to perform in order to achieve the objectives.

Implementation and Evaluation: An implementation schedule for the action programs and a method for evaluating the plans effectiveness.

ANALYSIS OF THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

This section will define the Moab Ranger District's place in the winter market and some external influences on the District's program.

The La Sal Mountains are located in Southeastern Utah near the city of Moab (Map 1).

Although the range is isolated from major population centers, Moab is becoming a destination area for recreationists, both nationally and internationally. Moab's popularity has traditionally been based on its proximity to Arches and Canyonlands National Parks and the Colorado River. The area's jeeping opportunities have also brought many people to explore the red rock desert. During the 1980's, mountain bikers discovered the opportunities for cycling the areas numerous jeep roads and as a result, the canyonlands have become a major center for mountain biking.

Although Moab is a small town in an isolated area, its reputation as a destination vacation area provides the La Sal's with great opportunity to capitalize on Moab's popularity.

Other Winter Market Areas

Other winter market areas that provide recreation opportunities within a 200-mile radius of Moab are the Wasatch Front near Salt Lake City; Brian Head near Cedar City Utah; Grand Junction Colorado; Glenwood Springs, Aspen and Crested Butte Colorado; Steamboat Springs and Vail Colorado; the San Juan Mountains around Durango, Silverton and Telluride Colorado; and a small facility in the Blue Mountains near Monticello Utah 60 miles to the south of Moab.

In 1974, a feasibility study was conducted exploring the possibility of developing a downhill ski area in the La Sals (USDA Forest Service, 1971). The study determined that a downhill area was not feasible at that time because of access and snow quantity problems and competition from other markets. The ability of local use to support a ski area was also questioned especially with the Blue Mountain ski area in operation 60 miles to the south.

Since the time of the study, the Blue Mountain ski area has had difficulty staying open due to the operator's inability to maintain liability insurance. The other areas mentioned above have expanded or become full scale winter resorts.

A downhill ski development for the La Sals remains questionable for the reasons stated in the 1974 study. As a result, this plan will focus on winter opportunities other than downhill developments.

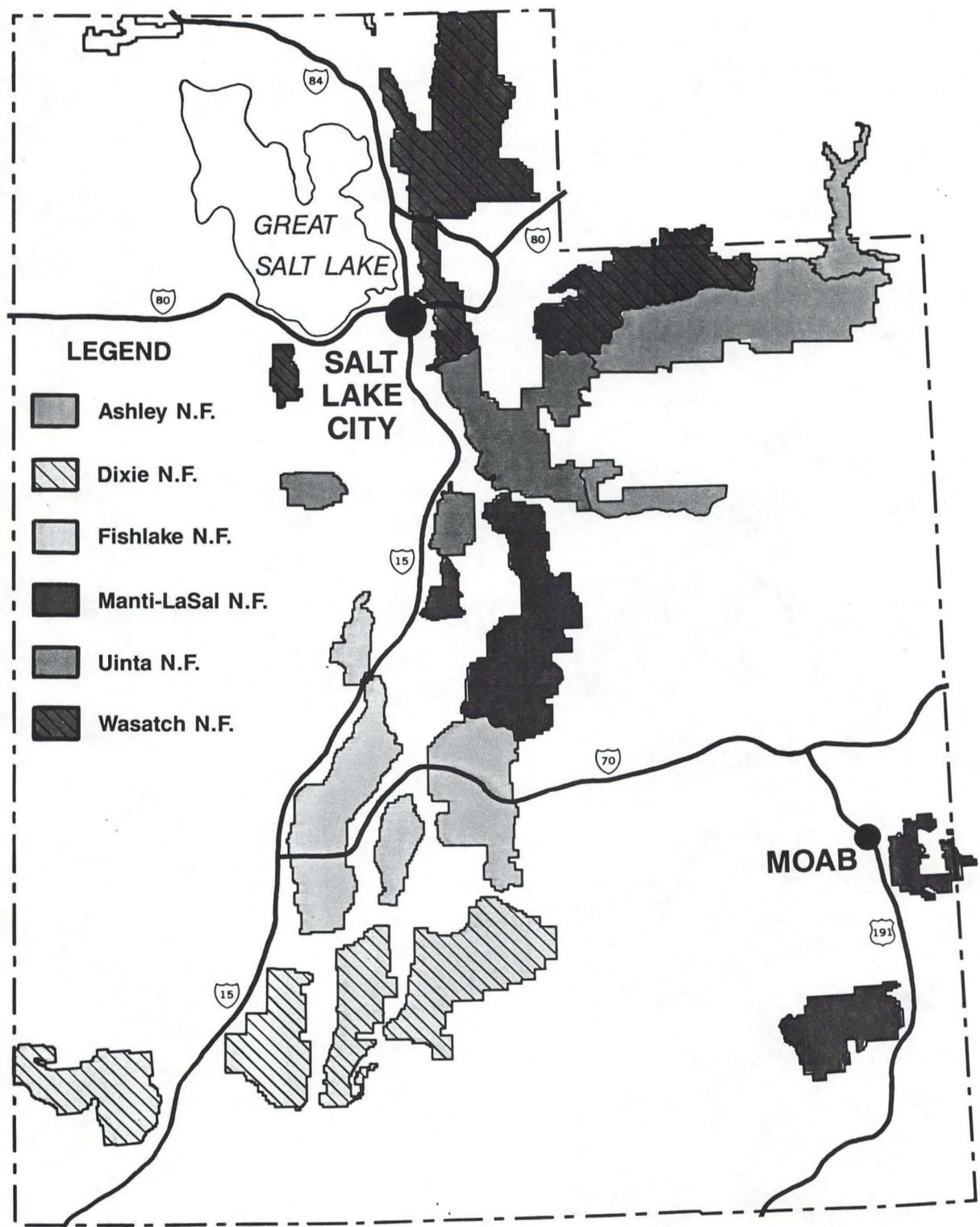
Landownership in the La Sal Mountains

Mixed ownership of lands in the La Sal mountains requires that programs developed to provide recreational opportunities be coordinated with the various landowners. Besides National Forest System lands, the mountains also contain private landownerships and large areas of lands managed by the Utah Division of State Lands and Forestry (Map 2).

1992 Olympic Bid for Salt Lake City

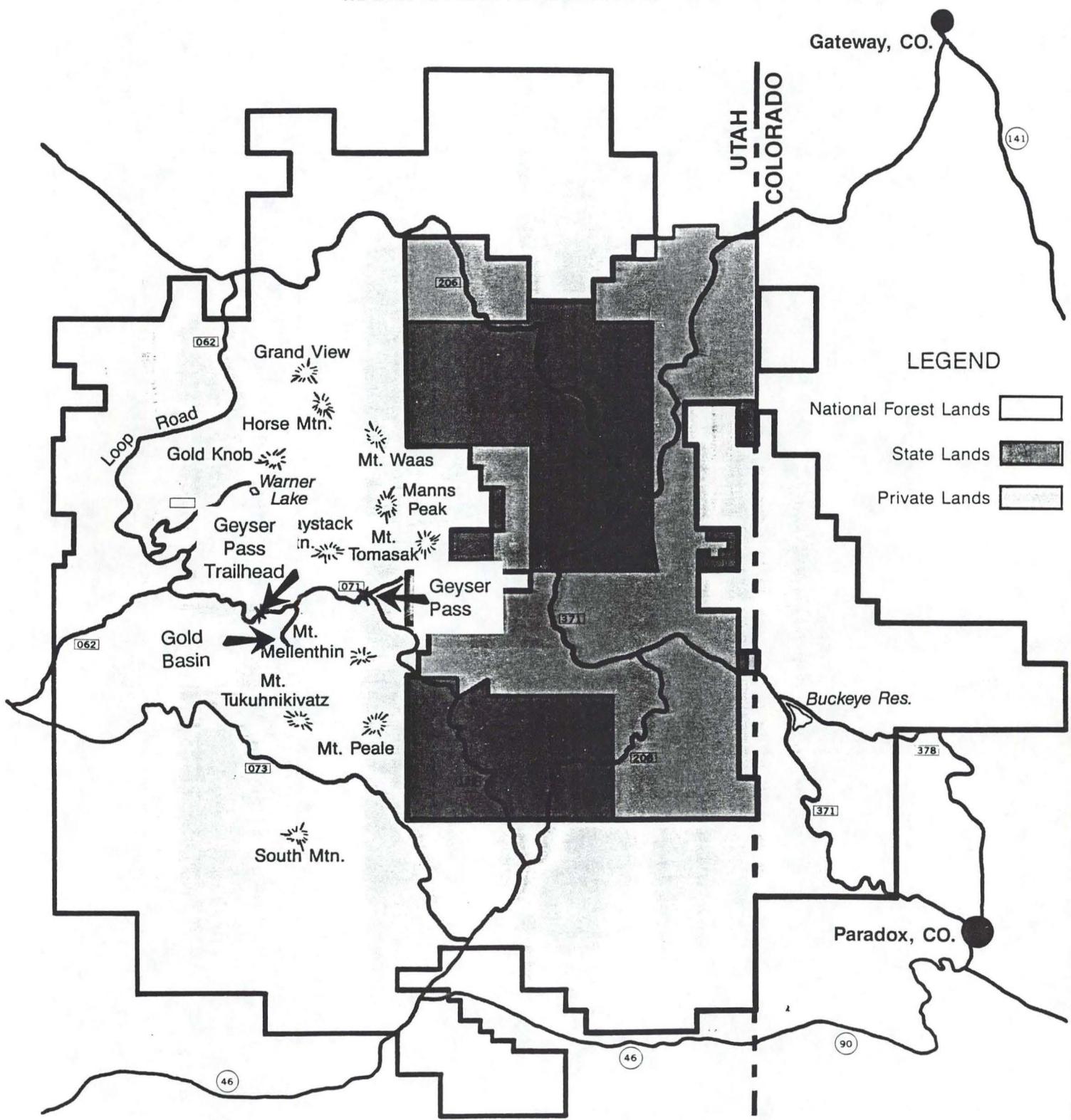
Salt Lake City has made a bid for the 1992 winter Olympics. Although the International Olympic Organizing Committee has not yet made a selection for a site Utah has committed to building facilities in order to hold the games. Ski area development and expansion are a part of this commitment. This will decrease the backcountry skiing opportunities along the Wasatch Front, an area that is already experiencing overcrowding in many areas. As backcountry skiing opportunities dwindle along the Wasatch Front use in the La Sals can be expected to increase.

MAP 1
LOCATION MAP
MOAB RANGER DISTRICT
MANTI-LA SAL NATIONAL FOREST



MAP 2

LA SAL MOUNTAINS LAND OWNERSHIP
MOAB RANGER DISTRICT
MANI-LA SAL NATIONAL FOREST



NEEDS ASSESSMENT

This assessment will determine which services we will offer based on the user's preferences and priorities.

During the winters of 1987-88 and 1988-89, user information was collected at the Geyser Pass parking area trailhead. The information was collected using a voluntary trail register. The 1987-88 data was not well monitored in the field. In addition, snow plowing was not yet in full operation and snow was not removed after every storm. As a result, the reliability of the 1987-88 data is questionable.

In 1988, the avalanche forecast center began operation, the forecaster was in the field 5 or 6 days a week, and snow was removed after every storm. This allowed for careful monitoring of user registration and an increase in data reliability. Only the data from 1988-89 is used for purposes of this plan. Table I is a summary of the 1988-89 data. The base data from the survey is contained in Appendix F.

TABLE I
SUMMARY OF USE BY PLACE OF ORIGIN AND ACTIVITY
Winter 1988-1989 Data in RVD's *
Geyser Pass Trailhead

ORIGIN	SKI	SNOWMOBILE	OTHER	TOTAL
MOAB	222.00	39.00	37.00	298.00
SALT LAKE CITY	151.00	1.00	6.00	158.00
MONTICELLO		11.00		11.00
COLORADO	51.00	4.00	6.00	61.00
OTHER UTAH	1.50	0.25	0.25	2.00
OTHER STATES	24.50			24.50
OUTWARD BOUND	280.00			280.00
TOTAL	730.00	55.25	49.33	834.50

* RVD (Recreation Visitor Day) = one person for 12 hours on National Forest System Land

Table I shows only use that was reported by those registering at the trailhead. However, field observation by the avalanche forecaster revealed that although most of the skiers and snowmobilers

were registering, a large number of people in the "other" category were not. The "other" category consists of people on scenic drives and those involved in snowplay such as sledding and tubing.

The activity of greatest participation was cross-country skiing followed by snowmobiling and other snow play. The "other" category is probably significantly higher than reported due to lack of registration.

A large percentage of the ski use (280 RVD's or 38%) was from Colorado Outward Bound, an outdoor education school. Telluride Helitrap, a commercial helicopter skiing operation, accounted for 23 RVD's in one day. A small amount of ski use was also reported from a 1-day avalanche awareness class and high school outdoor education classes.

Excluding Colorado Outward Bound, Moab contributed the greatest proportion of use in all activities. Salt Lake City use was second, followed by Colorado, and finally other states. Of the Colorado use, 10 RVD's were reported for both Grand Junction and Denver. Telluride Helitrap, as previously mentioned, contributed 23 of the 51 Colorado skiing RVD's.

A public meeting was held in the fall of 1989 to determine which programs and activities were important to winter recreation users of the District. The objective of the meeting was to scope the local users and permittees to determine what concerns they had, what coordination efforts were needed, and what direction we should take in developing winter recreation programs.

The public meeting was attended by individuals, businesses, and public officials. Attending the meeting were representatives of the Grand County Travel Council, the Grand County Commission, Moab Chamber of Commerce, a helicopter skiing special-use permittee, a representative of the high school outdoor education program, and local skiers. The following is a list of items discussed at the meeting:

- The key to increased recreation use in the La Sals has been the snow removal efforts of Grand County. All users were supportive of the current program and felt it adequately addressed the present need.
- Other possible routes for plowing in the future were discussed should the need arise for access to additional areas. The county commissioner expressed concern over funding for snow removal and felt we needed to explore avenues for alternative funding sources.
- Cooperation between skiers and snowmobilers was stressed. Zoning areas for exclusive snowmobile and skier use was regarded as a last resort only. Education was thought to be the best approach for the current amount of use.
- A need was expressed for a winter search and rescue unit trained in avalanche rescue and winter survival. It was suggested that the existing search and rescue unit under the direction of the county sheriff should be utilized with additional training for the unit. The avalanche forecast center's director is available to provide additional training.

- Support for the La Sal Avalanche Forecast Centers program was expressed.
- A family snow play area for tubing is needed.
- The need for a cross-country ski practice area for beginners was discussed.
- Toilet facilities are needed at the parking area.
- We need an informational brochure to describe opportunities available for people unfamiliar with the La Sals (Appendix D).
- Concern was expressed over the noise impacts associated with helicopter skiing and the need to ensure that this type of use is compatible with other uses and communities.
- We need to plan for increased use but also need to stress the quality of recreation experiences as opposed to quantity.

The registration information and public meeting comments indicate that most of our efforts should be directed at the promotion and development of cross country skiing opportunities. Snowmobiling should continue at the current level; however, the development and promotion of snowmobile opportunities will not be pursued. There are very few snowmobiles registered in Grand County, and the Blue Mountains to the south is a more popular area for snowmobilers.

The spring use of the La Sals for helicopter skiing is currently meeting the need. Winter use of the range for heli-skiing may be allowed if it is compatible with other private use and surrounding communities.

To better define our winter users and their needs a survey will be developed to be administered during the 1990-91 winter season. The objectives of the survey are as follows:

- Determine what percentage of out of town users came to ski the La Sals versus those that came to do other things and decided to go skiing once they were here.
- Determine percentage of visitors who are staying in motels, campgrounds, or with friends in Moab.
- Determine how long visitors are staying in Moab.
- Determine percentage of users using the avalanche forecast phone message before going to the mountain.
- Determine the percentage of users that have completed basic avalanche awareness training.
- Determine what other areas of the mountain users would like accessed.

MISSION

This section states the mission of Utah forests and how our program will contribute to accomplishment of the mission. The mission establishes some broad parameters in which to work.

Utah National Forests

A recreation mission for the Utah National Forests was developed in *A Recreation Marketing Strategy For The Utah National Forests* (Williams, 1987). The mission as stated in the Utah strategy is as follows:

"The recreation mission of the Utah National Forests is to better serve the recreating public and to provide the highest quality outdoor recreation experience possible. We will significantly increase outdoor recreation opportunities without detracting from existing Forest Service resource programs, expand our already diverse and extensive role in outdoor recreation, and promote tourism-based rural economic development in Utah."

This winter sports marketing plan is in support of the above mission. The following broad goals of this plan will demonstrate support of the recreation mission.

- Provide access to winter recreation areas.
- Increase outdoor recreation opportunities by providing a spectrum of winter recreation activities.
- Expand the Moab Ranger District's role in outdoor recreation by promoting the winter recreation opportunities on the District. Winter recreation has traditionally been neglected.
- Promote tourism-based rural economic development through winter programs and the support of businesses involved in winter outfitting and guiding activities.

OBJECTIVES

This section will state specifically what is to be accomplished. The objectives transform the mission into concrete operational terms.

The following objectives have been established in order to accomplish the goals of the mission.

- A. Provide a hut-to-hut skiing opportunity in the La Sal Mountains
- B. Provide a snow play area for family recreation
- C. Develop a winter search and rescue unit in Moab.
- D. Provide weather, avalanche, and road condition information to the public on a daily basis.
- E. Educate winter users on winter backcountry travel including avalanche awareness and first aid
- F. Provide safe access and parking for winter recreation.
- G. Develop a winter recreation opportunity guide for the La Sal Mountains.
- H. Cooperate with private businesses to provide recreation and support services.

STRATEGY

This section outlines general guidelines for the various program parts. The strategies provide a link between the objectives and the action programs.

The basic strategy of this plan is to develop programs that promote the La Sal Mountains as a backcountry ski touring destination area. Although other uses of the mountain will be accommodated, the main thrust of marketing efforts will be directed at the promotion of backcountry skiing opportunities. In line with this, the specific program strategies below will be implemented. These program strategies are taken from *Marketing Government and Social Services* (Crompton and Lamb, 1986). Each strategy is explained before a discussion of specific services.

Market Penetration Strategy

This strategy focuses on current programs in place serving existing markets. No attempt is made to expand programs or markets or to create new ones. This strategy is aimed at four program items.

- Snowmobiling

Snowmobile use on the La Sal Mountains has traditionally been very low. Few snowmobiles are registered in Grand and San Juan Counties. As indicated in the 1988-1989 use estimates, practically all of the use at the Geyser Pass trailhead was from Moab and Monticello, Utah. Monticello is 50 miles south of Moab.

Much of the discussion at the public meeting centered on conflicts that can arise from snowmobile and skier interactions. Presently these conflicts are minimal due to the relatively few number of snowmobiles using the mountain.

In order to maintain the image of the La Sals as a backcountry ski center no attempt will be made to market the snowmobiling opportunities in the area. Snowmobile use will be accommodated within the areas now open to snowmobiling, however, no marketing efforts will be directed at expanding current markets or programs.

- Snowplowing

Current snow removal efforts are directed at portions of two roads which access one trailhead. The parking area has a capacity of approximately 25 automobiles.

Consensus during the coordination meeting was that no more access was needed until increased use made it necessary to establish additional trailheads.

- Avalanche Forecast Center

Avalanche hazard study has centered around the Gold Basin and Geyser Pass areas. The hazard rating for the north and south massifs has been extrapolated from the study areas in Gold Basin and Geyser Pass with localized field checks in other areas to ensure that forecasts were valid.

This system will continue until use in other areas dictates that more intensive study is needed.

- *Heli-Skiing*

A heli-ski guide service currently operates a spring skiing business in the La Sals. As previously stated, there was concern expressed by individual users of the mountain that a large scale heli-ski operation during the winter could cause considerable noise impacts. The noise could affect large areas in the relatively small mountain range. The noise impacts are much reduced when the heli-ski business operates for only a short period in the spring.

Expansion of heli-skiing in the La Sals should only occur where compatible with other backcountry use.

Reformulation Strategy

A reformulation strategy improves existing programs and services for existing markets. This strategy is applied to four program elements.

- *Snow Play*

A large percentage of winter use in the La Sals is by families looking for an afternoon of tubing and sledding. There has been limited opportunity for families to enjoy this type of recreation other than on roads or on short runs off the side of roads. As a result, tubing areas have been designated to provide for this use.

Designated areas will be signed with adequate run out zones or protective fencing to keep people from sliding on to the road.

- *Search and Rescue*

The responsibility for search and rescue activities on National Forest System Lands rests with the appropriate county sheriff. The areas of concentrated use in Geyser Pass and Gold Basin are in San Juan County. The fastest response would, however, be with the Grand County Sheriff from Moab. As a result, a cooperative agreement will be explored between the Grand and San Juan County Sheriffs to give search and rescue responsibility for these areas to Grand County.

The Grand County search and rescue unit has little experience or training in avalanche search and rescue or winter survival. Additional training in avalanche rescue will be provided to the Sheriffs search and rescue unit.

- *Cross Country Touring*

Cross-country ski touring opportunities are the main focus of this plan. Currently skiing opportunities are limited to out and back trips from the parking area or other places that can be reached by automobile. Opportunities could be expanded by developing loop routes on existing roads and trails or developing new routes for ski use. A rating system will be devised similar to those at developed ski areas indicating the degree of difficulty and direction of each route.

- Telemark Skiing

A system similar to the touring system could be devised to direct people to relatively low angle meadows where telemark opportunities exist. Routes in and out of the areas should be marked. These areas should be limited to low angle slopes with minimal avalanche hazard.

Extension Strategy

An extension strategy increases user satisfaction with current programs or adds to the range of services offered. This strategy is applied to three programs.

- Hut System

Although some cabin owners make their cabins available for overnight accommodations, there is no organized hut-to-hut skiing system in the La Sals. Opportunities should be examined to determine routes and cabins that lend themselves to a hut-to-hut system. Yurts or other hut structures could be used in areas where cabins are not available.

- Guided Cross-Country Ski Tours

Guided tours should be offered through the services of a qualified guide service under permit to the U.S. Forest Service. Guided tours are now being offered from Pack Creek Ranch. This is the first season of operation for the business and additional applications for ski guiding should only be approved for areas and times that do not conflict with the existing operation. This year has not been a good snow year for a new business trying to get underway.

ACTION PROGRAMS

The action programs are specific actions to perform in order to achieve the objectives using the strategies developed in the previous section.

- A. Development of a hut-to-hut ski system
 - 1. Develop partnerships with cabin owners in the La Sals to utilize unused cabins for ski huts during the winter.
 - 2. Encourage guiding businesses to provide winter huts (yurts) where needed.
 - 3. Develop a Hut-to-Hut Association to maintain huts and trails.
- B. Develop a snow play area for families.
 - 1. Locate and design a family play area(s) for tubing and sledding.
- C. Organize a winter search and rescue unit.
 - 1. Utilize the avalanche forecaster to provide training to the existing county search and rescue unit.
 - 2. Develop a core team of trained individuals within the county unit to respond to winter rescues.
 - 3. Develop a winter search and rescue plan.
- D. Provide daily weather, avalanche hazard, and road conditions to the public.
 - 1. Issue a personal services contract to develop and operate a avalanche forecast center for the La Sal Mountains.
 - 2. Provide a phone line with a recorded message describing current weather, avalanche hazard and road information for the public to call.
- E. Educate users on winter backcountry travel including avalanche awareness and first aid.
 - 1. Cooperate with Canyonlands Field Institute to provide avalanche awareness training.
 - 2. Provide the local television station with avalanche awareness video tapes to air locally.
 - 3. Cooperate with the local television station to air an interview with the avalanche forecaster describing the avalanche forecast centers services and how they can be utilized.
 - 4. Publicize the forecast information telephone number in the local newspaper, The Utah Sports Guide in Salt Lake City, the Rocky Mountain Sports and Fitness Magazine in Denver, and on the local television station.

- F. Provide safe access and parking for winter recreation.
 - 1. Develop a maintenance agreement with the county to provide snow plowing services.
 - 2. Develop a parking area.
 - 3. Provide adequate signing.
- G. Develop a winter recreation opportunity guide.
 - 1. Develop a guide that describes what and where recreation opportunities are available.
 - 2. Provide an overview of avalanche hazard, access, and the services provided by the forecast center.
- H. Cooperate with local businesses providing support services.
 - 1. Lodging
 - 2. Guiding
 - 3. Equipment rentals

IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

This section outlines an implementation schedule for the action programs and a method for evaluating the plans effectiveness.

Implementation

A. Hut-to-Hut ski system

Work on developing a hut-to-hut system will begin in the summer of 1990. A basic system should be in place by winter 1990.

B. Snow Play Area

One area is in use. Other opportunities should be explored.

C. Winter Search and Rescue

Training will begin in February 1990. Further training and equipment purchase will continue through the summer. The basic unit should be ready to operate by November 1990. The search and rescue plan will be completed by November 1990.

D. Avalanche Forecast Center

This system is currently in place. The center will close down for the summer in April but will begin operation again in November 1990.

E. Education

All of the action items listed are currently in operation. They will continue in the winter of 90-91.

F. Access and Parking

Current efforts will continue. Other areas will be developed as use increases.

G. Recreation Opportunity Guide

A guide has been prepared. Xerox copies will be used this winter with a published guide completed for use by winter 1990-91.

H. Cooperation with local businesses will continue as opportunities arise.

The final step in the implementation of this plan is the development of alternative funding sources for the avalanche forecast center and snow plowing operations. This will be accomplished by exploring partnership opportunities with businesses to assist in funding these programs. A system of collecting voluntary donations will also be developed as well as exploring possible fundraising approaches.

Evaluation

Evaluation of the effectiveness of this plan will be in October and April of each year. This will provide for an evaluation before and after each winter season. The evaluation will be a meeting between the District Ranger, recreation forester, and the avalanche forecaster. This plan will be reviewed to determine which objectives have been achieved, which ones haven't and which need revision. Changes to the plan can be made at this time and an update performed. A public meeting will also be held in October to receive public input on the winter program.

Implementation and evaluation is the final step in this marketing plan. The plan has reviewed some of the history of the local economy and some winter programs currently operating on the district. There has been an analysis of the external environment and its influence on La Sal Mountain programs. User preferences were determined through a public meeting and registration data. Our recreation mission was defined and this plan's relationship to the mission was outlined. Objectives of the plan were determined and strategies developed to implement specific action programs. The final step was implementation and evaluation of the plan.

This plan should remain flexible. It is not intended to be the last word in winter recreation on the district. As new ideas arise they can be incorporated into the plan and if items contained in the plan are found to be ineffective they can be abandoned. However, this plan does provide a framework for implementation of winter programs on the Moab Ranger District.

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APPENDICES

- A. Memorandum of Understanding Between Grand County, Travel Council, and the U.S. Forest Service
- B. Utah Avalanche Forecast Center Review of the La Sal Avalanche Forecast Center's Operations
- C. La Sal Avalanche Forecast Center 1988-1989 Report
- D. La Sal Mountain Winter Recreation Trail Guide
- E. Avalanche Forecast Center 88-89 and 89-90 Season Comparisons
- F. 1988-1989 Winter Use Data